Canadian National Identity

PART

4

To what extent should individuals and groups in Canada embrace a national identity?

Ray Kowalski: *You know, Fraser, when they offered me this assignment, they made it sound kind of normal. They say, "Hey, Ray, here's a chance to start over, ditch the past." "What's the catch?" I say. "Oh, your partner's Canadian." Canadian? I got nothing against Canadians, except for the time when they won the World Series.*

Benton Fraser: *Two times.*

Ray Kowalski: *Which I'm willing to overlook.*

Benton Fraser: *Thank you.*[1]

The excerpt above is from *Due South*, a television series about Canadian Mountie Benton Fraser, who was assigned to the Canadian Consulate in Chicago, to work with the Chicago police. The series exploited the stereotypical image of Canadians as polite and unassuming. The tough and smart Fraser was often underestimated because he was extremely polite. Does this characterization suggest an image of Canadians held by people in other countries? Can this image be justified in any way?

▲ Crowds walk through the financial district in downtown Toronto, one of North America's most ethnically diverse cities, in 2007. Many people consider Canadian cities to be among the best in the world. Why might people think this?

◀ Manitoba Métis Federation president David Chartrand (right) and former MMF President John Morriseau wave to supporters before entering the Manitoba Law Courts, in Winnipeg, 2006. The largest Métis land claim in Canada was about to be heard in a Manitoba courtroom, 25 years after the lawsuit was first filed and 136 years after the conflict was ignited. How do Aboriginal land claims affect you? How do they affect Canadian national identity?

Inuit students model sealskin clothing on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, in 2007, to support sustainable seal harvesting. Do you support seal harvesting? Why or why not? ▶

1 "Memorable Quotes from *Due South*," Internet Movie Database. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0194607/quotes.

Visit the Learn Alberta site www.LearnAlberta.ca and click on the *Perspectives on Nationalism* learning object for fully interactive learning scenarios entitled ExCite (Exploring Citizenship). These scenarios related to issues and concepts in the Student Resource enhance learning.

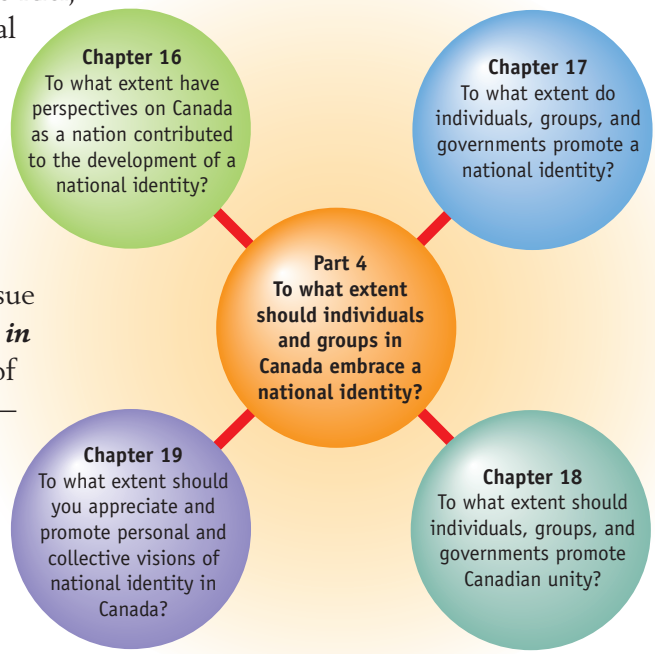
As you have seen throughout this text, there are challenges and opportunities in identifying with a nation. We now need to decide to what extent one should embrace national identity. Exploring the challenges and opportunities presented by complex issues about Canadian identity will give you a foundation for your response to the Main Issue for Part 4: ***To what extent should individuals and groups in Canada embrace a national identity?*** These issues are vital for all Canadians, including Francophones, Aboriginals—and you. You have to decide whether you can best act on your beliefs as an individual, as part of a group, or some combination of the two.

Is it possible to pursue a single vision for our vast country, from sea to sea to sea? Again, you will explore the forces of history, geography, and culture as you investigate what it means to pursue and define a Canadian national identity. What has held this country together? Has our vision of Canada changed over time? Do we want to see a different Canada in the future?

In this Part you will explore how individuals like Louis Riel, Sir Clifford Sifton, and Pierre Trudeau promoted a national identity. You will examine how organizations like the Assembly of First Nations and federal, provincial, and territorial governments contribute to or provide challenges for national identity.

The Key Issue for this course asks: ***To what extent should we embrace nationalism?*** Now, you can conclude your exploration of this issue by investigating the Main Issue for Part 4: ***To what extent should individuals and groups in Canada embrace a national identity?*** How does a sense of Canadian identity affect your world? In your community—for example, in your school—how does a Canadian identity improve your life or make it less comfortable? Does it have any effect at all? If not, why not? To what extent should Canadian unity be promoted? Should we accept different national identities in Canada? Should a single national identity be embraced by all Canadians?

In the chapters in this Part, you will explore issues that will help you form an opinion about the Main Issue for Part 4: ***To what extent should individuals and groups in Canada embrace a national identity?*** Look at the four Chapter Issues. As you work through Part 4, think about what strategies you might want to use to promote a Canadian national identity.


Chapter 16
To what extent have perspectives on Canada as a nation contributed to the development of a national identity?
Chapter 17
To what extent do individuals, groups, and governments promote a national identity?
Part 4
To what extent should individuals and groups in Canada embrace a national identity?
Chapter 19
To what extent should you appreciate and promote personal and collective visions of national identity in Canada?
Chapter 18
To what extent should individuals, groups, and governments promote Canadian unity?